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ABSTRACT

This paper is not so much about research on school leadership delivery systems as it is about instructional methodologies, concepts, and ideas for rethinking the relationship between theoretical frameworks and the broader issue of practical applications for quality education-about what it means to restructure schools or meet the needs of today's students and tomorrow's society. It is based on the authors' experiences in both the world of educating school leaders of the future and the pressing needs for schools that are designed differently, and teachers are disposed to accommodate the new realities. In a case study approach, 39 graduate students in educational leadership were asked to analyze four selected case studies about organizational behaviors and structures using the five elements of the model of school restructuring they were being taught. Cases were presented through a listserv. The global examination of the 4 cases by these 39 students led to findings five critical ingredients to create high-impact educational institutions: (1) sense of purpose, mission, and possibility; (2) sense of belonging, safety, and participation; (3) access and contribution to support systems for everyone; and (4) teaching and learning that is authentic, engaging, and empowering. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

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Doing School Differently: The Leadership Factor

World Association for Case Method
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DOING SCHOOL DIFFERENTLY: THE LEADERSHIP FACTOR

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Abstract

This paper is not so much about research on school leadership delivery systems as it is about instructional methodologies, concepts and ideas for rethinking the relationship between theoretical frameworks and the broader issue of practical applications for quality education—about what it means to restructure schools or meet the needs of today's students and tomorrow's society. It is based on our experiences in both the world of educating school leaders of the future and the pressing need for schools that are designed, and teachers who are disposed to accommodate the new realities.

Key Words: leadership, schooling, school leader preparation, case facilitation, listserv, technological tools.

Throughout the world, schools and school districts are aggressively searching for strategies and models to guide efforts to fundamentally restructure the goals, structure, operation, and outcomes of public education. Due to this fact, colleges and universities are carefully listening to those voices and therefore, presenting new modes of delivering educational leadership programs in order to fulfill the needs detected. New definitions of learning, frameworks for curricular content and organization, strategies for standards for student assessment and institutional (as well as professional) accountability, attention to the needs of increasing numbers of "at-risk" students and diversity of student populations, and indeed, the role of schooling in a democratic society; are just some of the arenas in which debate over new approaches has been most vigorous.

All of the above are compelling reasons for higher education institutions to reconsider those aspects of preparing school leaders not only on the content and quality of instruction, but on new forms of leadership that will be required of school board members, principals, and superintendents. If new models for the development, organization and delivery of instruction are to achieve goals, then equal attention must be paid to developing organizational priorities, structures, norms, and support systems necessary to support them. These are new challenges for schools of education, particularly for educational leadership preparation programs.

The fundamental challenge we face today in both, the educational and corporate arenas, is the need for restructuring the organizational context of schools and schooling in a manner that will promote, enable, and, support important educational changes at the classroom or instructional level. Collectively, studies of new leadership approaches focus on the need to: distinguish between leadership and management; develop organizational cultures that promote innovation and experimentation rather than risk reduction through inaction; support increased autonomy and empowerment of people throughout the organization; change both professional, as well as financial reward structures; and, perhaps most importantly, focus more on

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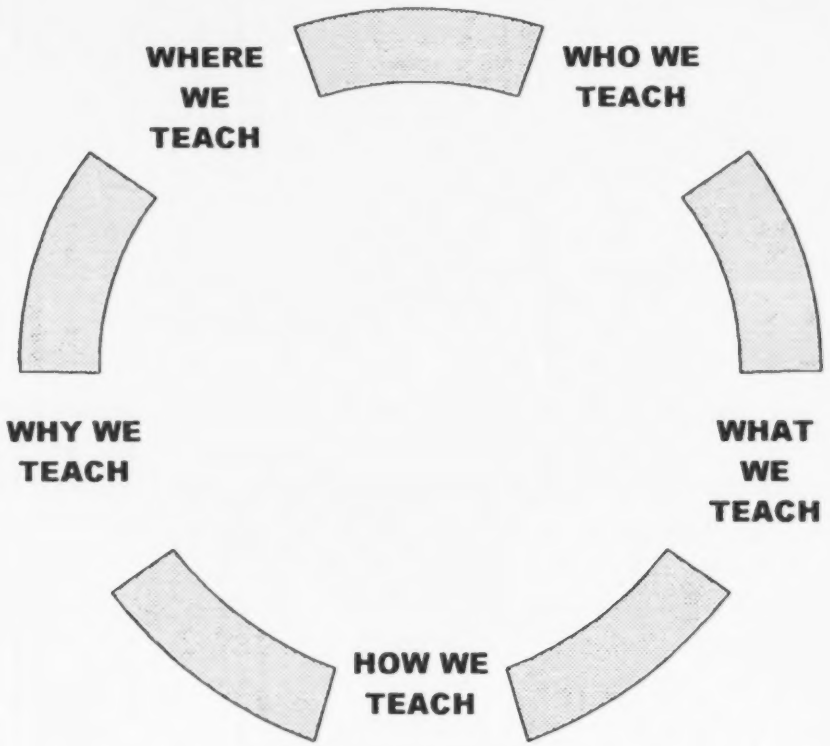
establishing broad-based, proactive consensus around a clear and consistent vision of the organization's mission and purpose.

The objective of this paper is to suggest a strategic framework to guide the development of such a model of classroom teaching by using case study approach. The framework is organized around five considerations derived from the metaphor of education as teaching which was developed by Judson Hixon (1997), diagramed by the authors:



The model calls for redefining the roles and responsibilities of schools and schooling (***why we teach***); understanding the schools' new clients (***who we teach***); developing new priorities and strategies for organization (***how we teach***); restructuring the organization, management and operation of schools (***where we teach***); and redefining curricular goals, content, and organization (***what we teach***).

Why we teach?

Schools have always been designed to address the needs and realities of society at particular points in time. Today's society has dramatically changed but those substantive changes are not reflected in the organizational structure of schools and schooling. To improve the quality of schooling and American public education, then schools will have to be organized according to

the new realities facing today's society. Over time there have been some changes such as Chapter I, literacy initiative, bilingual education, instructional practices, and accountability movements to mention some. We teach because the schools of today are going through deep changes in order to reflect the changing life circumstances.

Who we teach?

The nature of the schools' clients, students and their families, has dramatically changed in fundamental ways. Not only are the schools' clients more diverse in easily observable ways such as skin color and language; but they are different in terms of the histories, knowledge, and experiences they bring to school, and the life contexts within which their schooling occurs.

What we teach?

Schools are developing new goals and outcomes for education, as well as strategies for achieving them. What we teach goes beyond the content of the formal curriculum. It goes beyond the cognitive, affective or conative domain. The teaching of values, attitudes and perspectives are included in the curriculum implemented in most schools now. Indeed, students learn that there are people that are more valued and rewarded than others. They are taught that they must have expectations about themselves as well as have expectations for themselves.

How we teach?

In the majority of today's schools, teachers and school districts are ensuring that students acquire their knowledge base through effective instructional practices. The old model of instruction, which remains the predominant one in elementary and secondary schools, can be replaced as teachers gain a deeper understanding of new instructional strategies. Once this happens, teachers tend to use more of these new strategies. Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (2001) identified and explained nine instructional strategies that are most likely to improve student achievement across all content areas. They are:

- Identifying similarities and differences
- Summarizing and note taking
- Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
- Homework and practice
- Nonlinguistic representations
- Cooperative learning
- Setting objectives and providing feedback
- Generating and testing hypothesis
- Cues, questions, and advance organizers

New models for instruction must be based equally on new priorities for what we want to accomplish, as well as understanding and utilizing the strengths of the students we want to reach.

Where we teach?

Schools must develop new relationships with the communities in which they exist. The boundaries of schooling must become more flexible, allowing for close interaction between the

school and the community. Schools and communities should bring their resources and support system together to effectively reach an integrated body.

Supporting Research

Just as leaders in America's industrial and corporate sectors must develop new perspectives, and learn new skills to be competitive in an international, information-based world; so too must educators make fundamental changes in the management and priorities that have thus far guided their organizations. After all, they too live and work in the "information-age" and their students must be prepared to live, work, and assume leadership roles in a world where information, ideas, and problem-solving capabilities will increasingly be the measure of a nation's capital, and the foundation on which America's future quality of life will be based.

Thomas Sergiovanni (1999) says "schools need special leadership because schools are special places" (p.1). Yes, schools are unique places responding to political and social influences they face. Schools are not isolated from the other systems. They closely interact with local businesses, churches, hospitals, community groups, state and local governments. These relationships force school leaders to possess special characteristics or even unique political skills to deal with all the people involved. They should be able to recognize the knowledge, skills, competence, and commitment of all persons in one way or another involved in and responsible for the process. School leaders are the ones called to identify the patterns of interaction between all key players and find the strategies for monitoring and feedback of what we're doing, how well we're doing it, and whether or not "it" is accomplishing what we have identified and agreed is important. They lead the processes and procedures for change (Calabrese, 2002).

There is an old saying: "You are what you eat." In that same vein, "You become what you think about." Leadership is challenging each one to begin thinking differently about the need for a total integration of what we call leading and managing the school culture. Snowden and Gorton (2002) identify basic cultural elements of effective schools: (a) a positive organizational culture, (b) emphasis on academic effort and achievement, (c) belief that all students can achieve, (d) ongoing faculty development and innovation and, (e) a safe and orderly learning environment. Schein (1985) asserts that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture. Therefore, creating, managing, and leading the culture are important roles that a school leader must understand and practice.

Based on discussions of new perspectives, definitions, and characteristics of a leadership approach to education for all individuals, the question becomes how do we go about preparing school leaders to work in, or indeed create schools that reflect this expanded view of what a school leader should be?

Context of the Study

The study was developed in a classroom context for the course entitled "Foundations of Educational Leadership and Development". The context included: clients (39 graduate students in the Educational Leadership Program of a Midwestern comprehensive university); political structures and priorities (departmental regulations, NCATE requirements); the nature of instructional changes (case studies and technology tool); including the role and position of the

instructor in an increasingly demanding college environment. The program itself, School Leadership manifests four factors which reflect critical areas of impact that can "make or break" any improvement process. These factors include leadership, equity, innovation, and renewal.

Instructional Device

The significantly increased needs for offering an instructional approach which would energize the participants' interaction and discussion led the instructors to search for a variety of instructional pedagogical modes applicable to higher education learners and, specifically, to veteran educational professionals. To finalize the decision on the instructional approach, three subjects were interviewed. Two former students and school administrators at the elementary school level, and a current student were asked the question: what does a graduate student, and future school administrator expect from an educational leadership course? The interviewees agreed on the following: (1) interests in "practice" rather that "theory"; (2) wanting to know what to do in certain circumstances; (3) differentiating routine behaviors from routine duties; (4) acquiring some knowledge about leadership theory to identify what leadership style is most appropriate to exhibit; and (5) making the right decision as a result of their own actions or problems resulting from the behavior of others.

Based on these qualitative findings, the case study approach was chosen to be the primary instructional and pedagogical device to stimulate individual and group involvement in "real-life" events requiring the application of the concepts and theories. The technological component was added due to the NCATE requirements which solicit demonstration of professional standards through the infusion of technology in the curriculum content.

Pedagogical Procedures

This study has proposed that there are five key strategic agendas that are reshaping-restructuring, if you will—school leadership programs in the United States. In brief those issues are: why we teach, who we teach, who teaches, what we teach, how we teach, and where we teach.

These factors helped shape the structure of the instructional pedagogical approach intended for the course. Based on them, the 39 subjects were instructed to analyze the four-selected case studies using the five elements (questions) of the model. Knowing that cases are tools that are increasingly used in education to explore challenging issues and to reflect on diverse experiences (Miller and Kantrov, 1998), the case contents were more than narratives of events, they were cases "of something" as Shulman (1992) said. They were a set of ideas worthy of reflection and deliberation.

The four cases were related to organizational behaviors and structures. The first one presented an episode in motivation. In this case four types of teachers were identified and the principal's role was to combat the unmotivated teachers. A second case whose content was connected to school culture and climate provided data from a questionnaire completed by teachers on how they perceived the school was operating. The lowest score was interpersonal relations. The cultural and ethnic reasons of the bilingual education program were the topic of the third case. The students were asked "to wear the hat" of a curriculum director of a large and diverse school district. The last one focused on decision making and the political influences of a superintendent on a newly appointed principal.

Connecting Case Studies to the Listserv

The model represents the fundamental base for constructing, developing, and implementing the case approach in the classroom. For each case, the subjects utilized the five phases of the instructional model adopted. Productive discussion of the phases, as primarily intellectual dialogue among school leadership students, occurred in a listserv created for the purpose of interaction and faster communication among them. A listserv is an instructional tool that has proven to increase students' participation in responding to cases (Gil-Garcia, 1998; Gil & Quinones, 1999). This technological instrument induces students to become self-managing learners, promotes collaboration, invites openness to change, facilitates a problem-solving approach to learning, and makes pupils reflect on their knowledge about their own learning. Once the case was analyzed, the subject was expected to e-mail his/her answer to the listserv in order to start the interaction with the rest of the classmates. The instructor facilitated the process of subscribing to the LEAD421-L listserv. Students received a handout describing the steps on how to subscribe to the listserv and how to send email messages. Once a verification of subscription was emitted, the listserv subscriber was able to interact on the net. The listserv allowed the students to expand the discussion of topics related to organizational theories, development, and analysis. The LEAD421-L listserv is a means of exchanging, commenting, dissenting, conveying ideas, etc. on the topics posted by the instructor. Participation is closely monitored and should address the discussed topic exclusively. Students were encouraged to view the listserv as a professional list and thus use it accordingly, keeping the tone of the discussion at that level.

The use of both, a case study and a listserv, indeed facilitated the access to timely and accurate information as well as thoughtful responses. In that process, the students were expected to show how they think about what they know, and what they do with what they know; in other words, the feelings about those with whom they work and the students and families they will serve as school leaders is more important than how much they know. More specifically, the application of the five phases in the development of the situations they were confronted through the cases allowed them to conclude this.

The Issues

In summarizing the responses based on the framework of the five phases applied to the analysis of the existing situations, the following were found:

1. **Why we teach**: "*redefining the roles and responsibilities of the schools*"

Statements such as "*this case has significant implications for the structure and procedures of the school. It has made apparent that the principal is given a large amount of latitude in rule interpretation and decision-making.*" Another one stating roles and responsibilities says "*the communication between the levels of administration may need to become more frequent or defined.*" It was also reflected in the responses that "*the situation has implications for all aspects of the school's organizational structure. This includes the communication between administration, the interpretation of district policy, and the relationships between school, student, and community.*" More analysis included "*the zero tolerance policy does not take into account the ambiguities of individual situations. The rule*

has now been enforced in an extremely strict sense;" "schools have a responsibility to effectively communicate to the public on any policy affecting students or community in general;" the system has a fault. The superintendent should get involved to create a committee of educators for review of teachers' and students' relationships." Another testimony says "*the school district should promote cultural sensitivity training for both staff and students…the school district should explore ways to keep open lines of communication between students and staff so that situations like this would not escalate."* Based on views and judgments of case analyzers in regard to Why We Teach, it is found that communication and decision making were the two major organizational components to be considered as mechanisms to enhance and redefine the roles and responsibilities of schools.

2. **Who we teach**: "*understanding the schools' new clients*"

The responses fluctuated from "*fathers and mothers of racial, ethnic and cultural groups who will be integrated into the life of the school so that they hold comparable statuses and play comparable roles in school-related organizations and activities."* Also "*educators of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups and of both sexes who will be integrated throughout the staff of the school so that the opportunity structure is open to all equally."* Finally, and more important "*students of both sexes and of all racial, ethnic, and cultural groups to be integrated into the social system of the school so that they perceive themselves as peers and friends, and that the distribution of values and roles in the school will be similar for all groups."* Based on opinions and positions the new clients of the school are all--male and female--members of the society who are racially, ethnically, and culturally related and who play comparable roles in school-related organizations and activities.

3. **What we teach**: "*rethinking what we want students to know, be able to do, and be like*"

Most reflections circulated around suggestions *to faculty on how to improve student achievement in the areas of reading and mathematics. Teachers have adopted curriculum content based on standards and the public pressures of the accountability movements.* The analysis of the content analysis showed *the existing emphasis on knowledge of content, where any teacher can teach, as long as he knows his subject area. The 'what we want students to know" refers to the curriculum presented as part to whole, with emphasis on basic skills as we traditionally have taught in our classrooms. Teachers generally have acted in a didactic manner, disseminating information to students.* Based on this evidence, the What We Teach asks for a curriculum presented holistically (whole to part) with emphasis on big concepts; students viewed as thinkers with emerging theories based on their prior knowledge and their exposure to what they have heard, seen, read, felt, and experienced; the acknowledgement of authentic teaching and assessments as means for developing minds.

4. **How we teach**: "*new goals, models and strategies for organizing and managing instruction*"

There were testimonies on *modalities and groupings for instruction reflecting strategies for getting all students to achieve the same types of outcomes (e.g. ability to access post-secondary education).* The attention to *different learning styles, predispositions, or patterns were mentioned as well as different teaching styles for instruction.* The most relevant piece of instruction was detected in the analysis of the cases referred to *the matching between*

pedagogical philosophies and instructional strategies and techniques corresponding to teach and educate academically challenged students. Based on the findings connected to the phase How We Teach, there are organizing instructional factors such as student diversity as an instructional resource, new models for instruction based on equally new priorities for what is wanted to be accomplished. "For a long time, teachers had the models of instruction, but they didn't know 'why?'", says Dickman, coauthor with Nancy Stanford-Blair of *Connecting Leadership to the Brain*.

5. **Where we teach**: "restructuring the organizational contexts and culture of schools"

"*There are serious implications for the culture of the school. Students and teachers who see the school administration acting in an unfair and heavy-handed way will lose respect for the integrity of their leaders.*" "*The superintendent needs to have a clear vision of his/her desired school environment before he/she decides what course of action to take in any matter. The superintendent's decision will have a long-term effect on the school.*" "*Strong schools recognize the importance of constant change and improvement by discovering, recognizing and applying new ideas.*" "*Organizational structures will contribute to employee perceptions of the work environment. Climate, culture and character are heavily influenced by opportunities to communicate and by the trust established by such interactions.*" Based on the written statements of the case analyzers, the evidence is clear and compelling that schools must rethink norms, values, belief systems, assumptions, ways of thinking, history, heroes/heroines, myths, rituals, artifacts, art, visible and audible behavior patterns. Culture develops over a period of time and, in the process of developing, acquires significantly deeper meaning. An organization's culture consists largely of what people believe about what works and what does not.

Critical Ingredients for Leadership Development through Case Studies

Increasingly, cases are used in the higher education classroom. With greater emphasis on interactive and dynamic forms, case studies are an understandable and palpable choice to engage graduate students in thinking about relevant educational viewpoints. Use of cases demands the encouragement of multiple perspectives on a given issue. In this qualitative study, there was a diversity of interpretation regarding the interplay between theory and practice within cases. But, it is expected that there is no a unique solution to a case. Therefore, solving a case would lead in different directions: as a method of research, as a method of evaluation, as a method of policy studies, as a teaching method, and as an administrative tool.

The global examination of the four cases by 39 students led to finding critical ingredients to create high impact educational institutions. These ingredients are: (1) sense of purpose, mission and possibility; (2) sense of belonging, safety, and participation; (3) access and contribution to support systems for everyone; and (4) teaching and learning that is authentic, engaging, and empowering.

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